

Catholic Action

Pope Pius XI

Violations of the Concordat

Paul McGuire

An Inquiry as to the Method

Michael Ahern, S.J.

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Holy Father Deplores Attack on Catholic Action

POPE PIUS XI

The Holy Father's Christmas allocution, spoken to the Cardinals on the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Lateran Treaty. Reprinted from the Catholic Herald, London, December 30, 1938.

WE might give without further addition that paternal apostolic blessing which you, as the good sons that you are, so fully desire and have so amply deserved. However, We are now almost on the eve, not only of Christmas, but also of another anniversary to which We are asked to devote a thought and an allusion which seem necessary, that is, the eve of the tenth anniversary of the conciliation; moreover We have before us an audience which could not be more opportune, that is, more intelligent, more enlightened and answering better in a word to a subject so important in itself and rendered even more important, though assuredly not the easier to handle, through present circumstances.

We hasten to say and to proclaim in this place that Our celebration of this tenth anniversary must be a hymn of the liveliest thanksgiving, Our *Magnificat*,

Our *Nunc Dimittis*, Our and your *Te Deum*, to that Divine goodness which, from the time of Our first Encyclical, recalled to Our memory and Our pen those beautiful words: *Ego cogito cogitationis pacis et non afflictionis*; this made Us anticipate in Our heart that hour which Divine Providence was soon to cause to strike and about which it was Our duty to see that it would not be struck in vain.

THANKS TO ITALY

It is hardly necessary to say, and yet We say it aloud, that, after God, Our recognition and Our thanks are due to those very eminent persons—We mean Our noble Sovereign and his incomparable Minister—to whom is due the fact that this so important and beneficial work has been crowned with a happy end and a great success. We must mention also those eminent persons—Cardinal Gasparri and the Marquis Francesco Pacelli—who helped Us with an heroic assiduity in their work, a fact which may have hastened their death, and it is for this reason that We recall with gratitude their honor and their names.

But the duty of acknowledging Our recognition towards God and towards men having been accomplished, and having given Our cordial congratulations to the whole of that Italy which is so particularly dear to Us among the many other dear parts of Our great Catholic family, We are obliged unhappily to state because of Our apostolic duty and on behalf of sincere truth, as well as because of the reverence paid to Us because of Our age—that this long expected anniversary cannot bring Us that serene joy to which alone We would have wished to have made allusion, but rather grave and veritable preoccupations and bitter sorrows.

ATTACK ON CATHOLIC ACTION

They are bitter sorrows, truly, and further veritable and manifold vexations—We do not say that they

are general—but certainly they are very numerous and taking place in many localities against that Catholic Action which, as is well known, is the apple of Our eye, and—it must also be recognized and admitted—by the violation of various offices of Catholic Action and of its archives.

Catholic Action has no concern with politics and is not a matter for rivalry—a thing for which We have no desire—but solely purposes to make good Christians, living their Christianity, and by that very token, elements of the first importance for the public good, especially in a Catholic country like Italy, as the facts have shown.

When We observe the fervor in this regard of the less important circles, it appears only too clearly that even though Catholic Action was definitely mentioned in Our Pact of Conciliation, gestures of laxity and of encouragement have amply (though secretly) come from high quarters, for the vexations, indeed, continue in different places from one end to the other of the peninsula, and these are not only unimportant places.

CARDINAL GUILTY OF INTEGRITY

Yesterday We were notified about this in Venice, Turin, Bergamo, today it is Milan, and precisely the person of its Cardinal-Archbishop, "guilty" of a speech and teaching which exactly answer to his episcopal duties and of which We cannot but approve.

And here it is Ourselves who are reminding everybody that only what is Christian is truly and fully human. That which is anti-Christian, let us also recall, is inhuman, whether it is a question of the dignity of the human race in general, or of the dignity, freedom and integrity of the individual for which (save for necessary coordinations and cooperations) society is destined (as is also destined the very work of God, Creator and Saviour, to whom each man must

say: *Deus Meus es tu and Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*).

The offense, the wound struck at Our Concordat and precisely in that which concerns Holy Matrimony—and for every Catholic it is enough to say that—has not only caused the heart of the old Father bitter griefs because of the evil treatment meted out towards his so well-loved Catholic Action, but veritable and grave preoccupations to the Head of Catholicism and the Guardian of morality and truth.

NO NEED FOR DISCUSSION

We have no need to add further words to underline how the wound has gone straight and most painfully to Our heart. We know that it has been asserted that the Concordat has not been broken, but rather that it has remained intact. We are far from wishing to enter into a discussion of this kind. We believe, on the contrary, that if, in the case of the observation or non-observation of every bi-lateral pact, its interpretation cannot be usurped by one of the parties alone, this is even truer in the case of an interpretation which frees one so resolutely from all engagements to it.

MEMORY OF LEO XIII

We have another observation to make: it is a reminder of the great and glorious memory of Leo XIII.

When thinking again of the recent apotheosis prepared in Rome itself for a cross which is the enemy of the Cross of Christ, of that blow struck at the Concordat and of all the other things of which We have spoken to you, it did not seem to Us too much to hope for better things, if only because of Our white hairs. On the contrary, they have wanted in brutal fashion to go even further (Leo XIII, P.M. *Acta* 15, p. 269), and this reminder we make both to honor the truly honorable memory of that great Pontiff and to remind Ourselves of that spirit of magnificent pardon and to

imitate as We do with all Our heart, that most noble example, while praying God that He will deign to illuminate intellects and move hearts in the senses of truth and justice which are the only true and solid basis of the well-being of persons and peoples, as is written in Holy Writ: *Miseros facit populos peccatum*.

We have offered Our life, now an old one, for the peace and prosperity of peoples: We offer it again that inner peace, the peace of souls and consciences may remain intact, as well as the flourishing prosperity of that Italy which amidst all peoples is so dear to Us, just as His own country was so dear to Jesus who gave Himself to His passion and death for the human race.

That is Our Christmas vow and wish and it is with Him that We bless you again, both you and all whom you have in your hearts and thoughts.

The Method of Catholic Action

PAUL MCGUIRE

Reprinted from Columbia, January, 1939.

IN the various articles on Catholic Action that I have had the privilege of contributing to *Columbia* in the past year, I have written chiefly of French and Belgian organizations; for it is in France and Belgium and one or two other countries that what we can call the "achieved types" of Catholic Action now appear.

Nevertheless, I have not wished to give the impression that these types should be literally imitated in other countries. The Jocists and the Jacists and the Jicists and the Jecists and the Jucists (the Young Christian Workers, the Young Christian Peasants, the Young Christians of the Middle-Class, the Young Christian Students, the Young Christian University

groups) are the first to insist that each country must find its own methods, its own means, in its own situation. The traditions, the problems, the structure of life in the United States differ from the traditions, the problems and the structure of life in France or Belgium; and it seems to me most unlikely that a literal application of overseas techniques would be as successful here as in their own *milieux*, environments.

Yet obviously we can still learn much from the "achieved types." Methods and techniques which have been so astonishingly successful merit the closest examination; and beneath the differences produced by differences in temperament, traditions and local circumstances, there will yet be much in common; not only our common heritage as Catholics, but our common end as men, and our common end in Catholic Action, to restore all things in Christ. And there appear now, wherever Catholic Action advances, certain common experiences, which we may take, I believe, to be fundamental experiences that will recur everywhere.

It is of these that I wish to write in this article, drawing together the threads of what I have written here before.

First, let us be clear about this. Catholic Action is no longer a phrase, an idea. It is a fact, and the most vital fact, historically, of this generation. Catholic Action is in being. It is advancing as no other social movement, I believe, in the world's history has advanced. Literally, from China to Peru, it marches. The Church is now in what would seem to be its greatest wave of expansion since Apostolic times. And this great expansion is chiefly due to the summoning of laymen to the apostolate. Think of Shanghai, one city alone, where Catholic Action has instructed three-quarters of a million converts and begun instruction with another eight hundred thousand pagans. Think of the Young Christian Workers, founded by

three men eighteen years ago in Brussels. In July of last year those three men saw 85,000 young Christian working people assemble in Paris, delegates from the young Christian workers of twenty-four countries. It marches.

But what is it?

There has unquestionably been some confusion of thought in the English-speaking world. Catholic Action has been sometimes regarded as a direct instrument for political-economic reform, it has sometimes been seen as a chiefly defensive organization, marshaling Catholics against one and another of the modern heresies, Communism and the like. This is to put carts before horses. Catholic Action does have politico-economic effects, because it informs the men who compose society with right moral principles and because it restores to Catholics that sense of social justice and unity which is sublimely revealed in the doctrine of the Mystical Body. We know that where Catholic Action advances, society *does* begin to come right; as in Belgium where the great social movements, the Boerenbond and the National League of Christian Workers, are creating a new Christian, cooperative commonwealth. But this is an effect of Catholic Action rather than its immediate end.

Catholic Action is the cooperation of the laity in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. This means, simply, that the laymen are to share the teaching mission of the Church. *Go ye therefore and teach.* That is the task of Catholic Action.

Why is the layman called to this apostolate? Because, in modern conditions, the priest and the Bishop are shut off from the masses outside the Church. The Bishop cannot teach the millions of the mines, the factories, the stores, the shops. It is only those who live and work amongst these millions, who are, day by day, of those millions, who can influence them much. Life now is infinitely more complex than it was, and

the apostles of the Church must be multiplied in every corner. Hence, the layman is called to serve.

He is called to serve in his own immediate environment, in his *milieu*, the place where he works, in the surroundings of his everyday life. Each one of us must act in his own little world. If enough of us are acting in our own little worlds, then the whole world (which is, after all, only the sum of all our little worlds) is being reformed, and I do not know any other way in which it can be reformed.

When the three men who founded the Jocist movement came together, they said, "We shall conquer ourselves for Christ. Then we shall conquer our families, our friends, our workmates, our factories, our suburb, our city, our country, for Christ." Notice the order of their conquest. We begin with ourselves and our own immediate friends. We come together in a small group. We recruit for that group. When we have recruited enough, we split into two groups, and each of these groups then recruits, until each can split again. The process is a process of natural growth; as living cells multiply by growth and division, growth and further division, maintaining each with each an organic unity, so the cells of Catholic Action should grow; for the cells of Catholic Action are cells of a living Body, the Mystical Body of Christ. They are Its expression and revelation in the world.

Each of us must serve in his own place. It is surely obvious that the University student cannot do Catholic Action in the *milieux* of the workers, in the factories, the mines and the mills, for the simple reason that he is not himself in the factories, the mines, or the mills. The industrial worker cannot do the Catholic Action of the rural worker, nor the lawyer the job of the Catholic doctor. Each of us has his job here and now, where we are.

Catholic Action is not parochial action. Its base is in the parish, because the parish is the normal chan-

nel of sacramental graces to the Catholic. We have our parish sections, but our battle is in the world. We return to the parish for spiritual reinforcement, but the front line is in the places where we meet our fellows and where we can influence them. In most of the "achieved types" of Catholic Action, one will find that a parish section contains within it what are usually called Active Service Units, little groups of militant and ordinary members who work together in the same factory or office. It is these ASUs that are the front-line units, so to speak.

They are the growing-point of Catholic Action. It is they who are recruiting, converting. They return to their parish section to consult with their comrades, to study the problems which their action raises, but their action itself is in the ASU.

What is their action? How is Catholic Action performed?

It is, primarily, the task of incorporating men in the Mystical Body, and the Mystical Body is represented at each point by the growing cell of Catholic Action. We seek to incorporate in that fellowship wherein we are all members one of another and of which Christ is the Head. And we do it by an extension of the bonds of charity, of the meanings of Christ, amongst our fellows.

When we see ourselves as obliged to *teach* Christ in the world, we need not see ourselves as aggressors in debate and argument. We do not need to challenge our friends. But we do need to win their interest and their sympathy by our interest and sympathy in them. We must make them see, in our lives, that it is a good thing to be a Catholic. We must make them see that a Catholic is still that kind of man who once struck the ancient pagans with a kind of wonder, when they said, "See how these Christians love one another."

Catholic Action wins by charity. In the factory or the mine, the Jocist is striving always to better his

own condition, better the conditions of his fellows. For instance, at the end of each school year the Jocists already at work will consider the problems of the children who are leaving school for industry. Each Jocist section will sit down to questions like these: Do we know some boy or girl who is now starting work? Where is he starting work? What Jocists are there in that factory or mine? Tell them to meet the new worker when he first comes to work, to befriend him, to help him. Help him to pick up his trade, help him in anything that puzzles him, help him with matters like his insurance, protect him in the factory from wrong influences. Find out if he likes his job. If he does not, why not? Is he physically fit for it? If he is not, take him along to the doctor. Is he psychologically unfit? Take him to the Jocist Vocational Guidance Bureau.

The principle is that the young worker must always help the young worker ("the apostle to the workingman must be the workingman," Pius XI), and he helps him by active charity in the proper and full sense of the world.

It is only by love that we shall master the world. Love is our instrument. But how much do we use it?

Within a group or section, one will commonly find both militant members and ordinary members, probably in the relation of one to two. The militant is the more active member, spiritually, intellectually and socially. He has his own militants' meetings, and in these he plans how to influence his ordinary members so that they may in time become militants, too. He works out, carefully, their common meetings, and in these meetings he sees always that four elements are provided. The group must have a spiritual life; it must pray together, both at meetings and at apt intervals by receiving Holy Communion together; it must do some study together; it must plan action together; it must enjoy itself. Meetings are made as attractive

as possible, especially those meetings to which likely recruits are invited. They are made to see that it can be very good fun to be a Jocist and a Christian.

The studies are as realistic as possible, related to the needs of the action which the section is doing. General courses of study for militants in simple apologetics and history and social principles are, of course, necessary, especially in the English-speaking countries, where so many of our neighbors are remote from any understanding of the Faith or of its history. But the basic method of study which seems now to be fruitful everywhere in Catholic Action is what the French call the *Enquete*, the Enquiry.

And Enquiry has three parts: it is an observation, a judgment, and an act. It must always lead to an act. Thus, one may ask: Who will make a good recruit for our group? *Observe* the possible people. *Judge* whether one will make a good recruit. If it seems that he will, then *act* to make a recruit of him.

Observe and judge him, observe and judge the things that interest him, observe and judge the technique one may adopt to win him: act on the judgment.

This type of action, to make recruits, is Catholic Action, and every group can begin to apply it from its origins. We should begin with it at once. It is in action that we learn the techniques of action; while we study to interest our immediate acquaintances, we are learning also how to fish for other men, as our groups extend.

This method, to observe a concrete situation, to judge it, to act in it, is now becoming the characteristic method of Catholic Action. One finds it in use amongst all the specialized sections, the Workers', the Peasants', the Students', the Employers'. The sections of *Chretienne Bourgeoisie*, for example, which consist of owners and managers of industry, will study the social Encyclicals, by applying the prin-

ciples of the Encyclicals to their own plants. Does my factory meet this Christian requirement? Observe it. Judge whether it does or not. If it does not, act. Study proceeds to action or, at least, to the suggestion of action. Study unrelated to action will inevitably be sterile.

The specialization into what may seem, at first sight, class divisions is not to emphasize or to confirm class antagonisms; it springs from the recognition of this fact: that each of us must be primarily active in our own place, where our daily lives are mostly lived, where our consciences are most concerned.

As each section grows in recognition of its own responsibilities, it grows in recognition of its responsibilities to others.

In the great modern industrial cities, men are lonely. They lack social security, they lack a social frame in which to organize their lives; above all, they lack that sense of a warm human fellowship which every individual, by nature, seeks. Communism and Fascism make headway because they provide this fellowship, because men find in them social cooperation, a common cause (and men, by nature, seek to serve some cause, some end beyond their own immediate, selfish, personal ends), and the breath of human fellowship. But we have an infinitely better fellowship to offer than Fascism or Communism: we have that fellowship in which we are incorporated in the Mystical Body, of which we are the members, Christ the Head. Men will respond to that if only we will reveal that to them. That is our task in Catholic Action—to make manifest our fellowship.

We shall not do it simply by organization. We shall do it only by living as members of Christ. We must be content to let our growth come slowly if it thus comes best. The cell which we plant when we form a group may be only a seed; but from a seed

grew that mustard-tree in which the birds of the air found shelter.

In all our apostolate, we can hardly do better than study the first apostolate. Our Lord gathered about Him a dozen men, very ordinary men, one may believe, when He first drew them to Him; and He trained them for three long years, in prayer, in action, in fellowship.

All the experience of Catholic Action shows that the ordinary sort of men drawn together in groups and trained in prayer, in action, and in fellowship, are the men who will again make Christ's Name known in the world. The task is not beyond anyone of us. Indeed, one has a deep suspicion that if we will only show ourselves fit and willing to do the work of God in the world, then the Holy Ghost often does the work for us. There seems no other way of explaining the growth and achievements of Catholic Action: it seems to march by miracles.

That Catholic Action May Flourish Everywhere

MICHAEL J. AHERN, S.J.

*Reprinted from the Messenger of the Sacred Heart,
February, 1939.*

IN the general sense that the Catholic laity have always offered valuable and enthusiastic cooperation with the Hierarchy, in such fields as charity, education, social works, catechetics, and apologetics, Catholic Action has always existed in the Church Militant. But Catholic Action, in that sense of the term used by Pope Pius XI, is no longer a purely vol-

untary, somewhat desultory and occasional, assistance rendered to priests and Bishops by Catholic laymen. Rather it must be considered to be an integral part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Catholic Action has now a juridical standing in the Church. The Catholic laity are no longer to exercise their zeal, as it were, privately and unofficially; they are no longer to be considered as occasional auxiliaries behind the battle-lines. Now they are to be mobilized for action, and are to be official lay units under the leadership of their Bishops and priests. The Catholic laity is to form official corps in the army of the Lord in the ceaseless battle against the enemies of Christ and of His Church. As Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer, we are to pray that this Catholic Action, which the Holy Father has so repeatedly and so vigorously urged, may spread and flourish throughout the world.

In addition to his authoritative exposition in the Encyclical on Catholic Action, our Holy Father gave illuminating and concrete directions for Catholic Action in the three Encyclicals which he published during the month of March, 1937. The first of these, issued on March 14th of that year, was concerned with the condition of the Catholic Church in Germany. The second—March 19, 1937—was a classic exposition and refutation of atheistic Communism. The Encyclical of March 28, 1937, treated of the condition of the Catholic Church in Mexico.

In his Encyclical letter to the Catholics of Germany, the Pope recalled to their minds the vigorous words of his Encyclical on Catholic Action, when he insisted on the primary requisite of the lay apostolate that Catholic life, in the concrete, must conform most closely and most strictly to the principles of the Catholic Faith. He noted with compassion that, because of such loyalty to their Faith, German Catholics had been subjected to all kinds of suspicions and re-

straints, had been accused of treason and civil disloyalty, had forfeited social and economic prestige. They had suffered all these ignominies and more, for exercising civil rights guaranteed to them by the Concordat. Thus they bore testimony to their Faith by acute mental and physical suffering—a form of Catholic Action that brought them closer to Christ.

CATHOLIC ACTION VERSUS COMMUNISM

Even where there may be no open warfare against the civil and religious rights of Catholics, there may be an insidious and ruthless "boring from within," principally by the fanatic devotees of atheistic Communism. Hence, in his Encyclical on *Atheistic Communism* our Holy Father points out that the defense of Catholic Action against Communism must be, in the first place, a vigorous and continuous social and religious apostolate, coupled closely and unceasingly with the propagation of the Kingdom of Christ in the souls of individuals, in the family, and in society at large. This lay apostolate of Catholic Action, this lay propaganda for the reign of Christ, must be auxiliary to the apostolic activity of the Catholic priesthood, and this in two principal ways: by helping in the spread of the Faith by means of organizations like the "Confraternity of Christian Doctrine," as well as by the exercise of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In the present dire economic crisis, apostles of Catholic Action must bring the principles of the great Encyclicals of the Popes to bear on the solution of the problems of the laboring man, so that he may enjoy that measure of social justice which the laws of God demand. Christ the Laborer should be the model, and His principles must be the guide, of all who work by the sweat of their brow. Not Communism but Christ must be, in social questions, the "Light that illumineth every man coming into this world."

CLERGY AND LAITY UNITED

The Encyclical to the Mexican Episcopate of March 28, 1937, has been justly called a new Magna Charta of Catholic Action. In this document our Holy Father reiterates, with added apostolic emphasis, certain outstanding principles. At the outset, he points out that the two most effective means for the sanctification of Catholic life must be sacerdotal holiness and the education of the Catholic laity for collaboration with the apostolic labors of the Hierarchy. He explains with his wonted energy and lucidity what he had already presented in previous Encyclicals, that the apostolate of the lay Catholic is integrated with the pastoral ministry of the Catholic clergy and is organically a part of Catholic life.

Catholic Action is, then, not solely an obligation and a privilege of the laity; it is as much so of the clergy. To use his own expression, Catholic Action is "an integrating and integral part of the sacerdotal ministry." This is not to be understood in the sense that Catholic Action is an inferior division of the hierarchial apostolate, and is, as it were, an afterthought. No, the care and responsibility of training the laity for the apostolate of Catholic Action belongs constitutionally to the hierarchical mission of the shepherds of the Church. In other words, the erection, constitutional organization, and spiritual direction of Catholic Action may not be neglected by the clergy of the Church without a grave dereliction in apostolic duty. And if it be necessary to recall the theological foundation for this charter of Catholic Action, one needs merely to recall the doctrine that the Church is the sacerdotal Body of Christ. The Catholic priest is the mediator of the New Law between Christ and the Faithful. The priest mediates primarily because he administers the Sacraments and is the mouthpiece of the official prayer and doc-

trine of the Church. But the Catholic Faithful participate also, by sacrifice and prayer, in this mediation. Does not the priest offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass not merely *for* the Faithful, but in *union* with them? He prays: "We offer to Thy Divine Majesty a holy sacrifice, an immaculate Host." All through the Mass he speaks not in the singular, but in the plural. Similarly the Faithful are united, through their union with the great High Priest, to the teaching priests, from whose lips comes the science of the Spirit, and whose voices must be reechoed even into the remote haunts of darkness and error by their co-laborers of the laity, in the universal priesthood of Catholic believers, in the unity of the royal priesthood in the Mystical Body of Christ.

PRACTICAL QUESTIONS ON CATHOLIC ACTION

The present writer, on the occasion of a recent radio broadcast, was asked a dozen questions about Catholic Action particularly in regard to its effect on the activities of Catholics in America. Some of these questions, with the answers proposed, will shed some more light on the nature and aims of Catholic Action. Hence, no apology is needed for giving them here.

Question I: Many non-Catholics, reading in European news dispatches about Catholic political parties, wonder whether or not Catholic Action in America is heading in the same direction. Is Catholic Action the germ of a Catholic political movement here?

Answer: Catholic Action is not a political movement anywhere in the world. By Catholic Action is meant, and this is the official meaning of the term, "the participation of the laity in the apostolic labors of the Hierarchy." This means that Catholics are, according to their abilities and opportunities, to teach the truths of Jesus Christ, to live lives that are flaming lights for all to see and for all to use as guides,

to carry into every form of human activity the principles by which Jesus Christ constantly remakes the world.

Question II: Because Catholic political figures naturally would be in complete sympathy with the principles of Catholic Action, is it the intent of Catholic Action to throw its support to Catholics running for public office?

Answer: Catholic Action is not a political but a religious movement, as we have already declared. Presumably Catholics who are in politics, if they know their religion, will be in sympathy with Catholic religious movements. If they are foolish enough to think that Catholic Action is a political movement, then this opinion of theirs is due to their own ignorance and not to Catholic Action. Any Catholic office seeker who would appeal for votes on the plea that his election was necessary for the success of Catholic Action, would and should be repudiated by all Catholics. The sole criterion for public office for all Americans is fitness, mental and moral, for the incumbency of that office.

A PROGRAM OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL LIFE

Question III: Does Catholic Action intend to encourage legislation—or the enforcement of legislation—on such matters as civil divorce, dissemination of birth control information, censorship of night clubs, etc.?

Answer: Since Catholic Action is not an organization, but a program of spiritual and moral life for Catholics, the principles of Catholic Action will guide Catholics in exercising their Constitutional rights in combating moral evils whatever be the form they take and in whatever field they appear. If Catholics as citizens are convinced that there is moral evil or moral danger in any of the fields of human activity mentioned in this question, then they should and will

oppose them. Would any of our friendly critics want us Catholics to be indifferent to public and private morality?

When all is said and done, the clearest description of Catholic Action is in the very words of the Holy Father himself. The official definition of Catholic Action has been given by Pope Pius XI in the two following statements:

1. "Catholic Action is the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the Hierarchy."

2. "Catholic Action consists not merely of the pursuit of personal Christian perfection, which is, however, before all others its first and greatest end, but it also consists of a true apostolate in which Catholics of every social class participate, coming thus to be united in thought and action around those centers of sound doctrine and multiple social activity, legitimately constituted and, as a result, aided and sustained by the authority of the Bishops."

In 1935 the Bishops and Archbishops of the United States, at their general meeting in Washington, D. C., called attention to the difference between "Catholic Action" and "Catholic Activity," in the following statement:

THE AMERICAN HIERARCHY EXPLAINS

The Bishops of the National Catholic Welfare Conference in their general meeting in Washington, D. C., November 14, 1935, call attention to all Catholic groups in the United States to the distinction between Catholic activity and Catholic Action. The Bishops remind all groups, according to the instruction of our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, that there is no such thing as Catholic Action unless there is an episcopal Commission. For a diocese there must be a commission from the Bishop of a diocese, for a province, from the Bishops of the province, and for the country, from the Bishops of the United States.

Only the Holy Father can give a commission for the universal Church on Catholic Action. When His Holiness does so he communicates with the Bishops."

In a booklet issued by the National Catholic Welfare Council entitled "Conferences on Catholic Action," it is stated on page 32 and following pages that Catholic Action should collaborate with the State in securing the public good. It cannot become the agent of politics and of political parties. Its members have the duty of diverting Catholics from party strife to the higher ideal of the real social good and uniting them, apart from all political interests, in a campaign for the higher interests of God and souls.

We Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer are implored by the Pope of Catholic Action to pray to the Divine Source of all grace that Catholic Action may flourish everywhere.

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A SUGGESTION FOR LENT

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Briefly, the facts are: Gerard Groote was born in 1340 at Deventer, in Gelderland, in the diocese of Utrecht. He was one of the ablest men of his time. He was well-to-do and traveled extensively. When he was thirty years old, he retired to a monastery to pray and practice penance. He was ordained deacon and became a very popular preacher. He founded a religious Institute called "The Brethren of the Common Life." Unjust charges were brought against him by men whose vices he reproved. He was forbidden to preach again. He retired to a house of his Congregation, appealed to Rome against the accusers. Before an answer came, he died, a martyr of charity, ministering to the plague-stricken.

Thomas à Kempis was a member of his Congregation. When the Founder died, the superiors wished to publish a remarkable spiritual diary, which he had left. But they knew his book would meet with opposition from the same men who had opposed Gerard so persistently. So they ordered Thomas to edit the diary. He did so.

In editing the diary Thomas made some changes. He left out certain parts. He added some of his own. He changed the order of the original. To him must go the credit for making this wonderful book known and loved for more than five hundred years. He never claimed to be its author. He was a humble and obedient religious who did what he was told to do.

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